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VIII. — *The Sources of the Germania of Tacitus.*¹

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THE possible sources of information on the geography of Germany and the life and customs of its inhabitants which were accessible to an investigator at the close of the first century A.D. may be conveniently classified under two heads :

- I. *Information at first hand* acquired by the author himself in German territory through personal interviews and observation.
- II. *Information at second hand*, furnished :
 - (a) by friends or acquaintances who had been in Germany or on the frontier, either in a private capacity or in the army, and finally through the medium of traders.
 - (b) by literary records dealing incidentally, professedly, or exclusively with Germanic geography and ethnology.

But while these sources may be determined with satisfactory completeness, and while there can be no doubt that so painstaking an investigator, as Tacitus admittedly was, would not have failed to consult what was available for his

¹ Bibliography: L. Voelckel, *Index lectionum*, Marburg 1788-89 (not accessible to me); R. Koepke, *Zur Quellenkritik der Germania in Deutsche Forschungen* 1859 pp. 5-43. 222-226; A. Baumstark, *Urdeutsche Alterthümer* 1873 pp. 1-19. 27-58; M. Manitius, *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte*, vol. XXII (1882) pp. 417-422 (on Pomponius Mela); G. Schleussner, *Quae ratio inter Taciti Germaniam ac ceteros primi saeculi libros Latinos . . . intercedere videatur*, Gymn. Progr. Barmen 1886 (a worthless compilation); A. Lueckenbach, *De Germaniae quae vocatur Taciteae fontibus*, Dissert. Marburg 1891 pp. 69; K. Muelenhoff, *Deutsche Alterthumskunde*, vol. IV (1898) pp. 17-50, and the brief introductions to the editions of the *Germania*, e.g. by Kritz, Zernial, E. Wolff, Furneaux, and Gudeman (Allyn & Bacon 1900), which latter contains an abstract of the present paper.

purpose, the question as to the precise nature of his indebtedness to his predecessors is beset with considerable difficulties, owing to the complete loss of so many works of importance which might have definitely settled numerous problems now incapable of solution.

The hypothesis that Tacitus himself visited German lands, though seriously maintained by many scholars of repute and not altogether abandoned even now, may be briefly dismissed, for the *Germania* does not contain a single observation or statement which would be explicable only on the supposition of a personal visit, not to mention that such a journey of exploration on the part of a Roman would have been next to impossible even in regions to which Roman legions had at one time or another penetrated. But even if we admit the possibility of a personal acquaintance with the territory and the people described by Tacitus, there still remain numerous passages in the *Germania* which would necessarily have been expressed quite differently under the circumstances,¹ nor does Tacitus himself anywhere appeal to his own observations, even in matters where the explicit confirmation of an eye-witness would have been expedient, if not actually called for.² But if the *Germania*, as just pointed out, not only contains nothing which might imply a direct knowledge of things Germanic on the part of the author, but on the contrary furnishes numerous details fatal to such a hypothesis, it follows that *all* of his information was secured at *second* hand.

Now of the six hundred items³ accumulated in this treatise, it is to the highest degree probable that a considerably larger number than has generally been assumed, came to him through the medium of personal friends who had visited

¹ Cp. esp. Baumstark l.c. pp. 43-58; Lueckenbach l.c. pp. 55-69; Muellenhoff l.c. pp. 23-26. The salient passages subversive of the above hypothesis are found in ch. 3. 9. 23. 27. 30. 33. 35. 41. 43. 46. The contention of Kritz and others that Tacitus was also conversant with the German language no longer merits serious refutation.

² Cp. the statement in *Ann.* XI. 11, quod non iactantia refero sed ut in rebus varie traditis verbis meis fides habeatur.

³ Of these only about seventy are found in other extant sources.

Germany and served in military campaigns, for we know that Tacitus habitually availed himself of such authentic sources of information, in preparing his *Histories* and *Annals*,¹ so that there is no reason to believe that he would have failed to do so in collecting his material for the *Germania*.

But however extensively the author must be supposed to have drawn from this fountain, the great mass of the detailed knowledge concerning Germanic rites and customs displayed in his treatise cannot well have been due to other than *literary* sources which lay in profusion about him.

Unless there existed highly important contributions to our subject, of which no trace has survived (a very unlikely supposition), the sources accessible to Tacitus were the following :

Extant : Caesar's *de bello Gallico*, Strabo, Diodorus, Velleius Paterculus, Pomponius Mela, Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*.

Not extant : Pytheas, Posidonius of Rhodes, Sallust, Livy, Agrippa's map, Aufidius Bassus, Pliny's *Bella Germaniae*, Marinus of Tyre. With the exception of the Greek authors, all of them have been regarded as having been more or less extensively consulted by Tacitus. It is the object of this paper to ascertain in each case to what extent or with what justice this has been done, and I hope I may be able to show, even within the narrow limits to which I am confined, that the conclusions hitherto accepted almost without question rest on very unstable foundations and are in not a few instances wholly unwarranted.

Before proceeding it will, however, be expedient to draw attention to the general neglect of a methodological principle which seems chiefly responsible for the false inferences so constantly met with in investigation of this nature. It is usually held that mere similitude between two authors is sufficient to establish the fact of indebtedness of the younger to his predecessor. But quite apart from the observation that similarity of subject-matter, especially where concrete details are involved, necessarily leads to a

¹ Cp. Ph. Fabia, *Les Sources de Tacite*, pp. 220-222, 342-346, and esp. Plin. *Epist.* VI. 16, 1, *petis ut tibi avunculi mei exitum scribam quo verius tradere posteris possis*.

certain stylistic similarity in its presentation, such parallelisms in thought and diction may well be due to a third source, common to two or more authors. In any case, mere *similitude*, however striking, will never afford a certain or even adequately reliable clew to indebtedness, provided there exist side by side equally striking *divergences* or *contradictions*, unless, indeed, we are ready to believe that an author like Tacitus, after thoughtlessly extracting from several sources a number of items on the same topic, merely pieced them together into a varicolored mosaic.

CAESAR. The earliest Roman account of Germanic life and customs is contained in a few paragraphs of Caesar's *de bello Gallico*.¹ The prime importance of his description lies solely in the fact that it is the *earliest*, and that the information was to a considerable extent acquired on the spot by personal observation and enquiry. That Tacitus was acquainted with these famous Memoirs would go without saying, even if he had not cited their author in a highly complimentary manner.² But the demonstrable acquaintance on the part of Tacitus with this work does not in itself necessarily imply any extensive indebtedness to it, as scholars have been all too hasty to assume, for a careful comparison between the two authors, where they deal with the same or similar topics, reveals but a single passage in the *Germania* which can be justly regarded as a reminiscence rather than an accidental parallelism,³ for the few other verbal coincidences⁴ usually adduced refer to topics which would naturally be expressed in similar or identical language. The remaining items of information, touched

¹ Cp. IV. 1-4 (de Suebis), VI. 21-24, to which are attached three chapters on the Hercynian forest and its marvellous fauna. A few incidental references are also found in I. 31-54.

² ch. 28, validiores olim Gallorum res fuisse summus auctorum divus Iulius tradit. It is the one passage in the *Germania* in which an author is directly mentioned by name, and it is curious to note that the only other allusion to the *de bello Gallico* in Tacitus (*Agr.* 11) pertains to this identical statement.

³ viz. ch. 1, 1, *Germania omnis*, with its abrupt opening.

⁴ Cp. *B. G.* VI. 17, 1, deum maxime Mercurium colunt (said of the Gauls, be it observed) with *Germ.* 9, deorum maxime Mercurium colunt; *B. G.* IV. 1, 8, multum sunt in venationibus; VI. 21, 3 vita omnis in venationibus with *Germ.* 15, multum venatibus . . . transigunt.

upon by both Caesar and Tacitus, all exhibit noteworthy *divergences* or *amplifications* in the later writer of so significant a character as to preclude Caesar as the chief or even ultimate source on the subjects in question.¹ Caesar, it cannot but be admitted, had at best only a superficial acquaintance with Germanic tribes and, what is important to note, this acquaintance was made under most unfavorable conditions, for the most characteristic customs, usages, ceremonies and modes of Germanic life could be observed only in times of *peace*. Such information as he does furnish on these topics, was, therefore, necessarily secured at *second* or *third* hand, through Gallic traders or prisoners of war and hence not necessarily accurate or authentic. Nay, it can even be shown that Caesar himself occasionally consulted *literary* sources² which were, of course, equally accessible to Tacitus. Taking all this into consideration and remembering that the author of the *Germania*, writing as he did nearly 150 years after Caesar, was in every instance in possession of more detailed and more authentic information than was vouchsafed to Caesar, we cannot but reject the assumption of any extensive indebtedness. The *Commentaries*, though certainly documents of superior importance, cannot, in the eyes of Tacitus, have had anything more than an historical interest and value.

VELLEIUS PATERCULUS. Velleius Paterculus, though serving in the German campaigns of Tiberius and thus within reach of first-hand information, may be dismissed in a few words, for the extant work, albeit fragmentary, reveals no trace of any influence upon the *Germania* or any other writings of Tacitus, to whom, indeed, the fulsome eulogist of Tiberius may well have been utterly repugnant.

¹ Lueckenbach, pp. 13-32, takes refuge in the hypothesis that in all these instances Tacitus intentionally corrects Caesar. But Tacitus had no motive for so covert a polemic nor would such a procedure be compatible with his high regard for Caesar, as expressed in *summus auctorum*. In any case, it would merely confirm the fact that he was *not* indebted to Caesar for those statements in which they *disagree*.

² See *B. G.* VI. 24, 2, *Hercyniam silvam quam Eratostheni et quibusdam Graecis fama notam esse video*. That Posidonius was one of these seems all but certain. Cp. Muellenhoff, *D. A.* II. p. 182 and below.

POMPONIIUS MELA. In the reign of Claudius, one Pomponius Mela compiled a compendious geography of the world in three books. The author deplores in his Preface that the subject unfortunately does not lend itself readily to a rhetorical treatment. Accordingly to relieve the weary monotony of geographical names with which he found himself confronted, recourse is had to stylistic embellishment of more or less relevant topics. Ethnological details, in particular, are distributed with reckless extravagance. In fact, there is perhaps no ancient treatise, professedly scientific or didactic, which so teems with grotesque information, culled from the rich storehouse of Hellenic fancy, myth, and anecdote. The strictly geographical items—the small book contains no fewer than 1500 names—seem to have been taken from fairly old and reliable sources,¹ now lost. This fact and the accident which made the *Chorographia* of Mela the earliest geographical treatise extant in Latin constitute its sole value for us moderns. In ancient times it is never cited except by that omnivorous reader, Pliny the Elder, who mentions Mela in the bibliographical indices to bks. IV. V. VI. of his *Natural History*.

Mela has devoted one small chapter (III. 3, 25–32), of less than fifty lines,² to Germany and this ludicrously inadequate account has hitherto, without a dissenting voice, been regarded as one of Tacitus' sources, while his stylistic indebtedness to this same rhetorician, presumably because of the extreme brevity of the paragraph on Germany, is made to extend over the entire compilation.³ It may well

¹ A geographical work of Cornelius Nepos, which is directly quoted, appears to have been his chief authority, and the celebrated map of Agrippa was probably also laid under contribution. Eudoxus, Hipparchus, and Hanno, though also cited, were doubtless known to this rhetorical compiler only at second or third hand.

² Fully one-half of these is, moreover, taken up with a bald enumeration of the forests, swamps, and rivers in Germany together with a description of the sinus Codanus in which Scandinavia is supposed to be located.

³ How deeply rooted this conviction is may be best illustrated by the fact that recent editors have without hesitation followed Heraeus in substituting *recedit* for *redit* (*Germ.* 35), simply because the former is found in Mela III. 1, 8, in *illam partem quae recessit ingens flexus aperitur* and yet *redit* is the wholly

be doubted whether there exists another universally accepted statement that is demonstrably so unwarranted by the facts.

Of coincidences in matters of detail between Mela and Tacitus a comparison reveals the following: Both speak of the huge frames of the Germans and their long-extended childhood. Both mention the *sagum* as an article of dress, that the Germans are given to robbery, and finally that they observe the rights of hospitality.¹ Few as these parallels are, it must be observed that the first two traits had already been noted by Caes. *B.G.* IV. 1; vi. 21; the propensity to plunder is but incidentally mentioned by Tacitus and in connection with the *comitatus*, the topic of Germanic clothing and hospitality being treated in special chapters as against *two phrases* in Mela. The assumption of Tacitean indebtedness would, therefore, be absurd, even if Mela's account, brief as it is, did not, moreover, exhibit palpable divergences with the Tacitean description. Thus the boundaries of Germany are given more accurately in Tacitus, and Mela's statement, "*corpora ad consuetudinem laborum maxime frigoris*" (sc. exerceant), is flatly contradicted and in part modified in *Germ.* 4, *magna corpora tantum ad impetum valida: laboris atque operum non eadem patientia . . . frigora . . . adsueverunt* (sc. tolerare).

Under these circumstances, it were superfluous to discuss the alleged stylistic influence of Mela upon the *Germania*, but as this has never been disputed, it will be necessary to prove its falsity. In the first place, it may be remarked, that Mela's paragraph on Germany does not even exhibit so much as a single stylistic parallel with the *Germania*, unless it be a word like *sagum* or a phrase like *insitam feritatem*, for these

unobjectionable reading of all the Mss.; it is used in the same sense by Verg. *Georg.* III. 351, to whose phraseology Tacitus is under deep obligations, and what is specially significant in the present instance, it occurs *twice* in none other than Mela himself. Cp. I. 9, 56, *redeunte flexu*; III. 1, 1, *in se ipsum redit* (sc. pelagus).

¹ Cp. III. 3, 25, *inmanes sunt animis atque corporibus* (*Germ.* 4); 26, *longissima apud eos pueritia est* (*Germ.* 20, *sera iuvenum venus*); *virī sagis velantur* (*Germ.* 17, *tegumen omnibus sagum*); 28, *ne latrocinii quidem pudeat* (*Germ.* 14, *materia munificentiae per bella et raptus*): *tantum hospitibus boni* (*Germ.* 21).

also, incredible as it may seem, figure in the lists compiled by Manitius and Schleussner to prove Tacitean indebtedness and yet genuine traces of such influence, if they existed, ought to have been found in that chapter, if anywhere.

In the second place the verbal coincidences found in the other portions of Mela's treatise are either inevitable, belonging, as they do, to the common vocabulary of the language or else the alleged parallelism is extremely faint, if not wholly imaginary.¹ But even granting that these phraseological resemblances were more significant than an unprejudiced examination proves them to be, we should still be driven to an absurd conclusion, none other, in fact, than that one of the greatest stylistic artists in the world's literature was so completely captivated by a rhetorical treatise on geography, whose information on Germanic affairs was grotesquely inadequate and vaguely generalized, that he could not refrain from borrowing its commonplace phraseology.¹

THE ELDER PLINY. Tacitean indebtedness to the *Naturalis Historia* of the Elder Pliny has also been advocated with considerable zeal and accepted without question and yet this contention² is also demonstrably erroneous.

¹ To substantiate this charge, it will suffice to select at random some of the phrases common to both authors which have been seriously adduced in support of Tacitus' stylistic indebtedness to Mela: III. 24, *Rhenus . . . certo alveo lapsus* (*Germ.* 32, *certum iam alveo Rhenum*); 26, *nudi agunt* (*Germ.* 20, *nudi . . . excrescunt*); I. 28, *lugere solemne sit sc. apud Aegyptos* (*Germ.* 27, *feminis lugere honestum est*); I. 64, III. 57, *celebratae carminibus* (*Germ.* 2, *celebrant carminibus*); III. 24, *sui similis* (of a river bed) = *Germ.* 4, *sui similem gentem*; II. 51, *nomen dedit urbs* (*Germ.* 45, *luxuria nostra dedit nomen*); III. 18, *manent vestigia feritatis* (*Germ.* 37, *famae lata vestigia manent*); II. 2, *expediam* (= *Germ.* 27, *expediam*); I. 5, *ambiunt*; I. 50, *late patentem*; I. 8, *includis amnibus*; I. 42, *interiores*; I. 60, *contermina*; III. 8, *adluit*; III. 30, *erumpat*; III. 11, *hactenus ad occidentem*; III. 23, *frons*; I. 24, *cingit Oceanus* (*Germ.* I. 43. 41. 5. 36. 45. I. 35. 42. 45), etc., etc.

² The alleged parallelisms in style and substance are all collected and discussed in Lueckenbach, pp. 34-48, who endeavors to account for the numerous discrepancies, so far as he does not prefer to ignore them, on the ground that Pliny "res ipsas describere voluit." Tacitus on the other hand "quatenus ad situm gentium in universum significandum aut ad vitam moresque cognoscenda et illustranda pertinere videbantur." In still other instances, we are asked to believe that Tacitus deliberately corrected Pliny.

In the first place, it may be observed that even if Tacitus was acquainted with Pliny's encyclopedia, for which we lack all evidence, though it is not intrinsically improbable, it does not seem plausible that he would have deliberately searched all through so bulky a compilation for details to be utilized in his *Germania*, for, with the exception of a short chapter in Bk. IV., Pliny's references to Germany are few, incidental, and scattered over thirty-seven books, not to mention that, as the subject matter was presumably not arranged alphabetically, nor provided with an index, its consultation for a specific purpose would have been attended with no little difficulty.

No painstaking investigator, moreover, such as Tacitus is known to have been, would, in any case, have had recourse to a compilation such as Pliny's, any more than a modern scholar of repute would be likely to cull his information from some Lexicon or Cyclopaedia.

This consideration, though hitherto invariably ignored, would be alone sufficient to render the assumption of Tacitean indebtedness to the *Naturalis Historia* somewhat hazardous at the very outset, even if an impartial examination of the few alleged parallelisms upon which the accepted theory is primarily based did not amply prove its untenability. The information furnished by Pliny being, moreover, found in detached passages, attention must again be directed to the canon formulated above; for here, if anywhere, palpable divergences will go far to neutralize any inferences that might otherwise be drawn from resemblances, however striking they may seem, when considered by themselves.

In Plin. *N. H.* IV. 12, 24, 79, we have a detailed account of the *Ister*, and we are told among other things that in its upper course it is called *Danube*. In this entire description Tacitus (*Germ.* 1) agrees with Pliny only in mentioning Mons Abnoba as the source of the river and in speaking of six mouths. But these facts were unquestionably matters of common knowledge. They might even have been taken from a map, for such were in general use fully a century before Tacitus's

time.¹ On the other hand Tacitus ignores the term Ister altogether, though it is carefully differentiated from the Danube by Pliny. Again, in mentioning only six mouths, he takes occasion to say that the seventh mouth, assumed by many,² was lost in the marshes, a statement which he certainly did *not* find in Pliny, even supposing that all the remainder had been due to that author. Clearly such a passage as this cannot establish Tacitean indebtedness to Pliny.

A still greater discrepancy between the two writers is revealed in Plin. IV. 13, 28, 99 f., where we read the following: Germanorum genera quinque: Vandilii quorum pars Burgodiones, Varinnae, Charini, Gutones. Alterum genus Ingaevones quorum pars Cimbri Teutoni ac Chaucorum gentes. Proximi autem Rheno Istiaevones quorum pars Sugambri, Mediterranei Hermiones quorum Suebi, Hermunduri, Chatti, Cherusci. Quinta pars Peucini-Bastarnae. From Tacitus, on the other hand (ch. 2), we learn that: Manno tres filios adsignant, e quorum nominibus proximi Oceano Ingaevones, medii Herminones, ceteri Istaeuvones vocentur. Quidam, ut in licentia vetustatis, pluris deo ortos, plurisque gentis adpellationes, Marsos, Gambrivios Suebos Vandilios adfirmant eaque vera et antiqua nomina.

That Pliny cannot possibly have been the source of Tacitus for this passage will be apparent at a glance. Thus the former mentions *five* generic groups, the latter only *three*, and speaks of still another classification, on the authority of older sources, which enumerated the Vandilii and three other tribes. Of these the *Suebi* are given by Pliny as a subdivision of the Herminones, though clearly differentiated from them by Tacitus in the second part of the *Germania*; the

¹ Cp. e.g. Prop. IV (V), 3, 35 ff., et disco qua parte fluat vincendus Araxes . . . cogor et *e tabula* pictos ediscere mundos. As Strabo, Mela, Pliny, and Ptolemaeus seem to have extensively followed the famous map of Agrippa, Tacitus, because of irreconcilable divergences in the names of tribes, must have consulted some other map, probably that of *Marinus* of Tyre, a distinguished contemporary geographer. Cp. Muellenhoff, *D. A.* III. 91 ff. IV. 51 f.

² E.g. Strabo, the Roman poets generally and the authority followed by Mela, which latter fact is here merely cited in passing, in view of the prevalent belief that Mela constitutes one of Tacitus's sources. See above.

Gambrii and *Marsi* again are omitted altogether by Pliny, whereas Tacitus completely ignores the *Teutoni*, *Burgodiones*, *Charini*, *Sugambri*, and mentions only one *gens Chaucorum*.

In IV. 17, 31, 106, Pliny closes his long enumeration of Gallic tribes with these words: *Rhenum autem accolentes Germaniae gentium in eadem provincia Nemetes, Triboci, Vangiones, in Ubis colonia Agrippinensis, Guberni Batavi et quos in insulis diximus Rheni*. This passage has been supposed to be the source of *Germ.* 28: *ipsam Rheni ripam haud dubie Germanorum populi colunt, Vangiones, Triboci, Nemetes, ne Ubii quidem . . . Agrippinenses . . . vocentur*. Here, it is true, we have the same tribes, but Tacitus doubtless changed the order with the fell purpose of covering up his palpable indebtedness to Pliny for so rare a piece of information! I have purposely chosen these alleged parallelisms from the *fourth* book, because it deals almost exclusively with geography and was, therefore, more likely to have been laid under contribution by Tacitus than incidental passages, if the *Naturalis Historia* was consulted at all. Of other items, only *two* call for special comment, the one because of an irreconcilable contradiction, the other because it has always been held to prove conclusively that the author of the *Germania* was directly indebted to Pliny's encyclopedia, for all the other passages adduced in support of this view pertain to well-known, concrete details which would be naturally mentioned by writers who had occasion to deal with the same subject, but even in these Tacitus furnishes information which is *not* found in the work under notice.

Pliny's discussion of *amber* is unusually exhaustive, taking up no fewer than sixteen paragraphs (XXXVII. 2, 11, 30-46), the very enumeration of the authors who had made some contribution concerning the origin and provenance of amber, proving, what is here worthy of notice, that a very extensive literature on this subject existed before Pliny's time, a literature that can hardly be supposed to have been wholly unknown to Tacitus.

Now in these paragraphs there are numerous parallelisms

both as regards expression and details, but they are one and all either unavoidably similar or else the identical statements were matters of common experience, observation, or knowledge, for even the one more specially noteworthy coincidence pertains to an item of information expressly cited by Pliny as known to *prisci nostri*.¹ On the other hand, Tacitus gives a number of details and suppositions which have nothing to correspond to in Pliny's apparently exhaustive exposition; all of these must, therefore, have been taken from some other source. But, what is far more important, we also find certain divergences between the two which would be inexplicable even on the supposition of an otherwise close dependence. Thus Tacitus conspicuously mentions the *Aestii* as engaged in the amber trade, and confines it to the Baltic Sea; Pliny says nothing of this tribe, and refers only to the shores of the North Sea as the region where the substance was procured.

But if any additional proof of Tacitus's independence of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* were needed, it would be furnished by their widely discrepant and irreconcilable description of the *Chauci*.² Pliny pictures this tribe as living in sordid poverty and devoid of all culture or refinement, adding with bitter scorn: *et hae gentes si vincantur hodie a populo Romano servire se dicunt! Ita est profecto, multis fortuna parcit in poenam.* Tacitus, on the other hand, paints the *Chauci* in roseate colors, and styles them "*populus inter Germanos nobilissimus*," who, though brave soldiers and equal to all emergencies, have not acquired their reputation by

¹ Plin. 43 ff. *arboris sucum esse etiam prisci nostri credidere ob id sucinum appellantes. Pinei autem generis arboris esse indicio est pineus in adritu odor et quod accensum taedae modo ac nidore flagrat . . . liquidum id primo destillare argumento sunt quaedam intus tralucentia ut formicae culicesque et lacertae quae adhaesisse musteo non est dubium et inclusa durescente eodem remansisse*—Tac. *Germ.* 45, *Sicum tamen arborum esse intellegas quia terrena quaedam atque etiam volucris animalia plerumque interlucent, quae implicata humore mox durescente materia cluduntur. . . . Si naturam sucini admoto igni temptes in modum taedae accenditur alitque flammam pinguem et olentem, mox ut in picem resinae lente*scit.

² Cp. *Nat. Hist.* XVI. 1, 1, 4, and *Germ.* 35.

belligerent provocation and unjust conduct toward inferiors. Strong as the author's tendency to idealize unquestionably was, it cannot in this instance satisfactorily account for the palpable divergences under notice, and that mainly for two reasons. In the first place, the Chauci were a tribe well known to the Romans who had often encountered them in battle, so that the *omne ignotum pro magnifico* would not be applicable to them. In the second place, Pliny's description, though possibly somewhat biassed and exaggerated, was that of an eye-witness.¹ If, therefore, the *Naturalis Historia* was as familiar to Tacitus, as we are constantly assured it was, it is difficult to believe that he would have deliberately cast aside information based upon direct observation, and that too in the case of a topic in which he might have been easily convicted of misrepresentation.

But if the encyclopedia of Pliny must, therefore, be eliminated from the list of probable sources for the *Germania*, it is to the highest degree probable, though not capable of proof, that the same writer's voluminous *Bella Germaniae*, which began where the *libri belli Germanici* of Aufidius Bassus² left off, constituted a rich storehouse of varied information for a treatise like the *Germania*. The work is cited by Tacitus himself,³ and it was admittedly one of the sources for his *Annales*. The extent of his indebtedness in the *Germania* cannot, however, be even approximately determined, not a vestige of Pliny's narrative having survived.⁴

SALLUST. There remain two other Latin historians who have not infrequently been classed among the possible sources of Tacitus; namely, Sallust and Livy. Both were held in high esteem by the author of the *Germania*.⁵ The former

¹ l.c. in septentrione visae nobis Chaucorum (sc. gentes).

² That this history was also known to Tacitus is evident from *Dial.* 23, but it too has wholly perished.

³ *Ann.* I. 69.

⁴ That topics in the *Naturalis Historia*, if also dealt with in the earlier work, were throughout identical in content, is an unwarranted inference.

⁵ *Agr.* 10, Livius veterum . . . eloquentissimi auctores; *Ann.* IV. 34, T. Livius, eloquentiae ac fidei praeclarus in primis; *Ann.* III. 30, C. Sallustius rerum Romanarum florentissimus auctor.

served as his stylistic model for historical composition,¹ and the latter's description of Britain is expressly cited. It is, therefore, highly improbable that he would have ignored or failed to read anything these writers may have contributed to Germanic geography or ethnology. But that Sallust had given an account of the tribes and customs of Germany in an excursus of his *Historiae*, usually cited by later grammarians under the separate title *de situ Pontico*, is an arbitrary assumption which is in no way confirmed by the incidental mention of the word *Germani* in two isolated fragments.²

LIVY. That Livy, on the other hand, did deal with the geography and customs of Germany is evident from the statement of the periocha of Bk. 104.³ But as his information could not well have been taken from other than two sources, namely, Posidonius⁴ and Caesar, it were hazardous to maintain, in the absence of all definite clews, that Tacitus was under any obligations to Livy's chapters, particularly as his style exhibits but few traces of any such influence.⁵

STRABO and DIODORUS. Of Greek authors who devoted some attention to Germanic tribes, if we except the writer to be discussed presently, only Strabo and Diodorus Siculus call for a passing comment. The former's Γεωγραφικά must be excluded, because Roman writers have, for some strange reason not hitherto explained, habitually ignored that valuable work, not to mention that the information furnished by Strabo, though based in large measure upon such authorities as Pytheas, Posidonius, and Caesar, exhibits too many dissimi-

¹ Cp. my *Introd.* to *Agr.* p. xxiv f., xxxvi.

² *Fragm.* III. 57 K. Germani intectum renonibus corpus tegunt, apparently a mere echo of Caes. *B. G.* VI, 21, 5, pellibus aut parvis renonum tegumentis utuntur, and *fragm.* 55, nomenque Danuvium habet (sc. Ister) ut ad Germanorum terras adstringet. Neither *Ister*, as already observed, nor *renones* occurs in the *Germania*. In view of the following discussion, it may be remarked that *Posidonius* was one of the authorities followed by Sallust for this very chapter, *de situ Pontico*. Cp. Muellenhoff, *D. A.* III. 75 ff.

³ Prima pars libri situm Germaniae moresque continet, followed by the narrative of Caesar's campaigns.

⁴ Muellenhoff, *D. A.* II. 125 ff.

⁵ Cp. *Introd. Agr.* p. xxxvi and notes to ch. 3, 1 f.; 33, 15 and *Germ.* 3 ext.

larities to warrant the assumption of direct indebtedness on the part of Tacitus. The same holds good of the few paragraphs in Diodorus, his account being, moreover, characterized by a lack of discrimination and a strong tendency toward the fabulous, grotesque, and improbable, thus contrasting very unfavorably with the sane judgment and careful sifting of the material at hand which is so conspicuous a feature of the *Germania*. Surely Tacitus could have found little or nothing in Diodorus, even supposing, what may safely be doubted, that the *Βιβλιοθήκη* was known to him.

But even if it be granted that the *Germania* was under considerably greater obligations to the authors enumerated above than the evidence will warrant us in assuming, and even if we make all due allowance for the probability that much information reached Tacitus through other than literary channels, there would still remain a large number of topics, and they include some of the most interesting and valuable in the entire treatise, which are not so much as alluded to in any of our extant sources. I refer to the subject of Germanic mythology, religious origins, festivals, and ritual. This information must, therefore, have been ultimately based, to a large extent, if not wholly, upon the investigations of some scholar who devoted special attention to topics of this kind.¹ Can his identity be discovered?

POSIDONIUS. Numerous considerations point to the Stoic Posidonius of Apamea as one of the principal sources for the information in question, even though direct indebtedness cannot, of course, be demonstrated.

This consummate scholar, the last and, next to Aristotle, perhaps the most versatile, original, and encyclopedic investigator in antiquity, the friend and teacher of Cicero, has

¹ It seems to me highly significant, that Tacitus, though habitually reticent as to his authorities, should so frequently refer to older sources of information in these particular chapters. Cp. ch. 2, *adsignant, adfirmant*; ch. 3, *memorant, quidam opinantur*; ch. 4, *eorum opinionibus accedo*; ch. 9, *parum comperi*. The plural, according to a method of citation much in vogue in ancient writers, even in the greatest, does not necessarily imply more than one authority, it being often due to the fact that several writers were quoted in the source directly consulted.

only in recent times been restored to honor. His influence, especially upon Roman writers, has been most profound and lasting in the many fields of human knowledge to which he turned his attention.¹ His writings, distinguished by all the graces of style, abounded in elaborate discussions of a geographical, ethological, and ethnological nature, and he everywhere manifested a keen interest in religious origins, theological questions, and the historical development of human society generally.

Lucretius, in the famous fifth book of the *de rerum natura*, Livy, Caesar, Sallust, in his introductions to the *Catiline* and *Jugurtha*, Varro in his monumental work, entitled *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* in 41 books, Strabo, Diodorus, Seneca, in many of his writings,² the poet Manilius, Sextus Empiricus, and even Ammianus Marcellinus, but above all, Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations*, the *de fato*, *de deorum natura*, *de divinatione*, and the *de officiis* were all alike, to a greater or less degree, under obligations to this Stoic savant. With Tacitus he shared the strong tendency to idealize past times and barbarian communities. Thus, the strikingly similar reflections on the purity and rectitude of the Scythians, found e.g. in Verg. *Georg.* III. 376 ff.; Hor. *Carm.* III. 24. 9 ff. Justin. II. 2, are demonstrably Posidonian. The doctrine of the influence of climate upon character is expressly attributed to Posidonius by Galen.³ But if his philosophical and scientific works enjoyed a wide popularity, his *Ἱστορίαι*, in 52 books, were consulted and pillaged no less extensively, the exhaustive account of the Cimbri and Teutones, in particular, remaining

¹ Cp. A. Schmekel, *Die Philosophie der mittleren Stoa*, 1892, pp. 9 ff. 85-154, 238-290; Susemihl, *Gesch. der griech. Lit. in der Alexandrinerzeit* II. pp. 128 ff.

² Cp. the 90th letter, which gives us the Posidonian account of the development of civilization. The curious parallelisms between Lucretius and *Germ.* 46. 14. 17 (where see my notes) are best explained on the supposition that both were indebted to a common third source, viz. Posidonius.

³ Cp. Galen, *de plac. Hipp. et Plat.* 5, p. 290. It is distinctly recognized e.g. in Seneca and *Germ.* 29, and is clearly implied in Mela III. 3, 33, ut caeli asperioris, ita ingenii (of the Sarmatians). Though Posidonius cannot be considered the originator of the idea, the general familiarity with it found in later writers is undoubtedly due to him.

the standard narrative for all later writers.¹ It is to Posidonius also that we owe the first mention of the name *Germani*² and the first description of their country (Posidonius apud Plut. *Mar.* 26).

Under these circumstances it does not seem plausible that Tacitus would have failed to avail himself of the labors of so suggestive, so trustworthy, and so great an authority, whose very attitude of mind and historical perspective had so much in common with his own convictions and feelings. The precise nature and extent of his indebtedness I do not, of course, undertake to determine, but I venture to draw attention to at least one piece of concrete information in the *Germania* for which Posidonius seems reasonably certain to have been the ultimate, not to say the direct, source. I refer to the identification of Germanic deities with the gods of Greece or Rome. This parallelizing process, based on the alleged existence of attributes and ritual characteristics, more or less similar, was familiar to Caesar.³ Now, as he cannot well be considered the founder of what may be termed comparative mythology, there is no one, save Posidonius, to whom the general introduction, if not the invention, of this method⁴

¹ Muellenhoff, *D. A.* II. pp. 113 ff.

² Athen. IV. p. 153 e, Γερμανοὶ δὲ ὡς Ἰστορεῖ Ποσειδώνιος ἐν τῇ τριακοστῇ. Muellenhoff, l.c. pp. 153 ff. intent upon proving, for some unaccountable reason, that Caesar was the first to distinguish the Celts from the Germans, is finally driven to the arbitrary hypothesis that the explicit citation in Athenaeus is either an interpolation or a deliberate correction for Γαλαταὶ or Κελτοί, and that Strabo, Valerius Maximus, Velleius, and Diodorus, presumably to deprive Caesar of the alleged distinction, repeatedly substituted *Germani* or Γερμανοὶ for the names which they found in their sources. The very manner, however, in which Caesar used the term can leave no doubt that he was familiar with it before he came into actual contact with German tribes. Again, as he regards the practically extinct *Cimbri* and *Teutones* as Germanic, this conviction can only have been based on earlier literary sources. But if so, nothing can be more plausible than that their great historian, Posidonius, had, previous to Caesar, clearly differentiated them from the Celts. Finally, the supposition that Caesar had observed the racial distinction between the Celts and the Germans implies a more intimate acquaintance with Germanic tribes than Caesar, as can still be shown, possessed.

³ Cp. *B. G.* VI. 17, 1 ff.; 21, 2, and my note to *Germ.* 9, 28.

⁴ The fact that Tacitus gives to it the name *interpretatio Romana* (*Germ.* 43) does not necessitate the assumption of an exclusively Roman origin, for that it was Greek is evident from the identification of *Donar* and the *Alci* with *Heracles*

can safely be attributed, for he is the only previous scholar, so far as known, who paid any attention to the mythology of Germanic and Celtic races, his conclusions having probably been given in his famous work, entitled *Περὶ θεῶν*.

Still other passages in the *Germania* which were in all likelihood ultimately, if not directly, based upon Posidonius are the statements concerning the origin of the name *Germani*,¹ their moral rectitude,² the motives assigned to the discontinuance of blood vengeance,³ the drink and food of the Germans,⁴ the story of the columns of Hercules⁵ in the Northern Ocean. Finally, the highly idealized picture which Tacitus draws of the life of the savage Fenni seems to have appropriated some of its colors from Posidonius.⁶

Summing up the preceding discussion, we may set down the following conclusions as reasonably established :

1. The entire material accumulated in the *Germania* was taken entirely at *second* or *third* hand, the contention that Tacitus had himself visited Germanic territory having nothing in its favor and weighty evidence against it.

and the *Dioscuri* (see my notes to *Germ.* 9, 27; 43, 25), these gods, or rather demigods, having never had a fixed or permanent place in the Roman pantheon. Probably shortly after Posidonius, some Roman antiquarian substituted *Jupiter* for *Heracles*, and this genuine *interpretatio Romana* was in the course of time universally accepted, as is clear from the French *Jeudi* (Iovis dies), by the side of German *Donnerstag* (Donar's day) and English *Thursday*. *Saturday* (Saturni dies) also points to a Roman origin. The Latin authority, I believe, was none other than Varro's *libri rerum divinarum*, published in 47 B.C. and dedicated to Caesar. It was, therefore, too late to be utilized in the *de bello Gallico*; on the other hand, Posidonius, as already remarked, was demonstrably one of the principal authorities followed by Varro. Tacitus may of course have consulted this work too, but in always mentioning Hercules, to the exclusion of Jupiter, as the equivalent of Donar, he certainly accepted the *interpretatio Graeca*.

¹ See my article in *Philologus* LVIII (1899) pp. 28 f.

² Cp. my note to *Germ.* 19, 22.

³ Note to *Germ.* 21, 12, where the parallel passage in Lucret. V. 1145 ff. suggests indebtedness to Posidonius.

⁴ Cp. 22 with my notes.

⁵ Note to Ch. 34, 22. Though *Pytheas* of Massilia was probably the earliest source for this statement, there is no reason to believe that Tacitus directly consulted the famous work of this ancient mariner.

⁶ Cp. Ch. 46, 23, with the passage from Justin. II. 2, 9 there cited, the latter or rather Pompeius Trogus being under great obligations to Posidonius.

2. It is to the highest degree probable that a very considerable mass of details, far more, in fact, than has generally been supposed, was furnished directly or indirectly through the medium of traders or personal friends whose presence in German territory or on the frontier had given them exceptional opportunities for observation and the acquisition of trustworthy information.

3 *a.* Of the *literary* sources, still *extant*, only Caesar was demonstrably familiar to Tacitus, but direct indebtedness to the *de bello Gallico*, if it existed at all, was at best confined within extremely narrow limits, and it must be rejected without hesitation in the case of Velleius Paterculus, Pomponius Mela, Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, Strabo, and Diodorus.

b. Of writers dealing with things Germanic, either in separate chapters and monographs or incidentally, but *no longer preserved*, Pliny's exhaustive *Bella Germaniae* may with some confidence be classed among the authorities extensively utilized by Tacitus. There are also many significant indications, though the assumption is not susceptible of absolute proof, that Posidonius contributed his share, both in matters of concrete information and in suggestive reflections, to make the *Germania* what it is. The alleged influence of Sallust is unwarranted, so long as the very existence of any discussion on Germanic life and customs must be seriously called in question. But, on the other hand, Livy's treatment of the subject is firmly established and his account was undoubtedly known to Tacitus, but inasmuch as Livy's information was derived wholly from one or two sources, such as Posidonius and Caesar, which were equally accessible to the author of the *Germania*, any direct obligations to this historian cannot justly be claimed, particularly as the *Germania* exhibits no significant parallelisms with Livy's style.

c. Finally, it is fairly probable that Tacitus had consulted Varro, Aufidius Bassus, and above all, some geographical map, presumably that of his contemporary, Marinus of Tyre.